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MARRIAGE

ITS ETHIC AND RELIGION

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MARRIAGE

ITS ETHIC AND RELIGION

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NOTE

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THE AGE'S UNCREATING WORD

CHAPTER I

THE AGE'S UNCREATING WORD

THE present is an age of what Mr. Balfour in one of his books aptly calls the Uncreating Word. Old institutions are either being reconstructed in practice, or they are being dissolved in thought underneath the existing practice. We are in a great day of judgment—in this sense at least, that we are deep in the critical age and the constructive age has barely begun. Dogma, as dogma, has ceased to reign; and Idealism, which ruled for a time, has lost much influence, even where it keeps its crown. Society seems to have become so stable, so unsinkable, that we feel safe to challenge all risks at full speed. We cannot believe

that the essential boons of civilisation will be lost, and we think we can toy with a great many of the sanctions under which they have been secured.

But there are some signs beginning to appear, even to the public eye, which tend to shake this confidence. It is the very central and vital things that are now flung into the crucible. Religious belief, even in the churches, becomes so fluid that many sections of the people live in chronic doubt if there is firm ground at all. Women revolt. Youth revolts. Capital revolts. Labour has wakened up to a sense of insurgent solidarity which threatens national dissolution. It has become possessed of a powerful social explosive before experience or responsibility has taught it how to handle it, or bred a public spirit, as distinct from a class. And, if it is mishandled, it is of a nature, from its position and function in society, to cause not only damage but wreck.

And so it is also with the central, cardinal institution of natural society—marriage. In every age, of course, it has been morally violated, but it is now ethically challenged. And there are forms of the challenge more dangerous than violation, because they claim moral support. It is one thing to confess ourselves too weak or wayward to keep an ideal which we yet recognise as a law, and it is another to challenge the ideal itself. It is one thing to have to do with a man who sins but says, 'I know it is wrong'; it is another thing to have to do with one who sins boldly in the exercise of what he believes to be a right, not to say an apostolate. And to-day it is the moral ideal of marriage that is challenged, and challenged by people who would not break its laws if they recognised them, but who have a mission to dissolve them.

What we have to do with, therefore, is not vice, but the error that ends in vice:

the vice that begins less in passion than in heresy, but which is perhaps even more fatal to society in the far end, because it is believed to be right. Evil becomes our good, and purity plays with perdition.

The traditional view of marriage is challenged by many who, though they concede too much to the fickleness of passion, are in a totally different category from the swarms of blue-bottles that hover immune upon social garbage. It is perhaps not from such foul vice that society is in most danger. That is deadly for weak or gross individuals. But society is most affected by the people who care for purity; and it is in most peril, therefore, from decent heresy rather than palpable vice—from social heresy, heresy as to what constitutes purity, from false theories of a subject more vital than any other to social welfare and cohesion. It is not a region where theory is academic

and indifferent. The most serious danger is from critical Idealists, who would dissolve the traditional view of the sanctity of marriage under the belief that its fixity is a premium on hypocrisy, and that they are exalting and purifying it. They would do so by making it more free. They have imbibed the modern tendency to reduce self-restraint. They are neither vicious nor gross (though they are sometimes recalcitrant and anti-social in temper); but they often fail in two respects. They play into the hands of the vicious, because they fail to protest as they should against the exploitation of their views by people who have none of their idealism. And they fail, through a lack of imagination that often goes with obsession by an idea, to follow out the action of their principles, and to forecast the consequences of their views when these shall have become a social creed.

MARRIAGE AS INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AS INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS

THE marriage question is so great that it has many aspects. Three might be selected in chief—as it concerns the pair, as it concerns society, as it concerns God. There are those who say, or who are tempted to say, that it concerns none but themselves. There are others who say it also concerns society, but no more. And there are those who think that these two views do not exhaust the situation, and that the chief factor is the reference to God and His will. In the first case marriage is treated as a mere matter of private *consent*, and it is justi-

fied by the mere mutual passion, which says to society, 'This is our business and none of yours.' In the second case it is a matter of *contract*, under the State, because society is so much affected by it that it claims the right to be consulted in it, and to give public *sanction*. In the third case it is a matter of religion, under the Church, which brings its divine *sanctification*.

Now I do not think that many who are beyond the erotic stage, when passion is its own guide, or the egoist, where individual rights are supreme, and where everything is sacrificed to liberty, and nothing sacred from it—beyond these, perhaps, not many would defend the first position. Those who claim individual freedom have always to appeal to society for protection in its enjoyment. They live securely only by a social consent. And, still more, the consequences of marriage are so grave and wide for society that it never can

be confined to the interests of the pair concerned. It has enormous results for the public: first, in its effect on the moral personality of the parties, and their contribution to the social tone; and, second, in respect of the offspring and their social education. That is to say, marriage cannot be confined to the affections of the married, but it is involved in the whole ethic, welfare, and dignity of the community.

That is, again (putting it in another way), the prime concern is not the liberty of the individual, or the couple, concerned; it is not private, but social; it is the interest of the family. It is the family, not the individual, that is the unit of society, its ultimate atom or cell, so to say. And it is impossible for society to allow the view that after mutual passion and consent all else is but form, and therefore entirely flexible. That is not ethical at all. It is the mere

æsthetic or erotic view; which unfortunately has great currency, because it is the view which lends itself to literary effect, and this is by way of being a literary age.

The inference from this plea is what many draw, that the form should cease or change when the passion that set it up ebbs or fails. This seems to mean that love has no tie, that permanent fidelity is not essential to union; which would then rest rather on the free concourse of passion or liking, and not on the relation of love with a moral nature. But no society can permanently rest on the mere freedom of its individuals or preferences. Some form, some inhibition, is part of its reality, however it may vary. It is the merest abstraction to sever them and declare that either is indifferent.

In the same way people say, in a kindred region, "If I have the religious, or the Christian, spirit, it does not matter in

what form of belief that is cast." But no religious society could live on such Atomism. Certainly a great human society like the Church could not. The form of belief, with good men, may vary for different ages, but it is never indifferent. A common Belief is variable, but essential. And so with the other great human society of the State. It also has its practical dogmas. It could not allow people who use its advantages and claim its pale to say, 'Your forms are entirely at the mercy of our fancy.'

It is only when marriage passes beyond mere consent that it becomes an ethical matter. Only then is it moralised. It becomes a matter of the family, of kinship, and therefore of the State. Indeed it becomes a matter of human society at large, which must always bar unions that do not conform to the conditions of its welfare and wait on its consent. Marriage is a social act. The social form is not

indifferent. It is part of the substance. It is a piece of social morality, *i.e.* of social existence. It is bound up with the safety, honour, and welfare of society.

But it is to be hoped we shall never come to mere civil marriage, as if it only concerned society. If anything is ethical on that universal scale, it has already begun to be more than ethical. On that wide scale, and on such an intimate subject, it becomes also deep and sacred, it becomes religious. Even if you own no more than the religion of Humanity that is so. You cannot treat human society as one whole without your ethic becoming religious. Even the Positivists, since they worship Humanity, treat marriage in their religious ritual as a sacrament. And I do not wonder that the Roman Church treats it so. I do not agree with that Church in so doing, for reasons which would be misplaced here. All I

do say is that the more one ponders the solemn implicates and slow effects of marriage, moral and spiritual, the more one feels that it has something sacramental in its nature. It may be less than a church sacrament, but it is a moral; it is certainly more than a contract.

We all know that there are marriages whose slow effect is to deepen and enrich religion on both sides; while on the other hand there are cases where the effect has been, on one of the parties at least, to weaken or to quench the religion in which they began. If not a sacrament, it is a means of grace; and, like every means of grace, it sweetens or hardens according as it is used.

At any rate the ethical and social view of marriage is quite inadequate, even if Humanity be all we have in view; how much more when we have in view the God of Humanity? It calls for more than social sanction—it calls for

divine sanctification, if life do so at all. If it means so much for the soul and for society, that is really because it belongs to the Kingdom of God, to the will of the God Who ordered society and its destiny. If it is organic to the structure of society, it is vital to the purpose of God. It is a union which reflects a union deep in the eternal nature of a triune God Himself. Hence if religion has a place in the institution of marriage, its proper place is supreme. Wherever it has a place, it has the ruling place by right. It has not only to add a benignant blessing to a natural institution, but it has the right to rule it and moralise it, govern it and lift it up, as it has the right to rule every great juncture of life.

Is it any use beating about the bush here? When we speak of religion, do we not at heart mean the Christian religion, as gathering up all that is best in the rest? Again I say I do not want to raise theological issues. I do not ask

what the exact relation of Christianity is to other religions, or to what is called natural religion, nor in what sense it is unique. I only say it is in a real relation to them, and one which makes the most and best of them, and reveals the working of God in them all. If there is a religious view of life and of marriage therefore, it must be the Christian view, substantially and in the long run.

And I will take another step—it must be substantially the view of the Church. By which I do not necessarily mean what has traditionally been the view of the Church. Nor necessarily the view of a particular section of the Church. But the whole Church of confessing Christians has the only right to say what Christianity is or should be. It is the company of the soul's experts; that is, the experients of the Gospel and the Spirit. So, by the Church's view I mean the form which the Church's principle may come, on the

whole, to take when we examine, in the light of an instructed faith, both the Gospel and the modern situation, when we review all the questions raised about the ethic of the past in the presence neither of passion nor of tradition alone, but of the changed social conditions and distresses. For the present challenge of marriage has largely a social cause in the conditions of the great city and its industry.

And again I do not mean that the Church has the right to force its law upon the State. Much of the prejudice against religion has been caused by the impression that the Church, in pressing its views, is seeking to coerce the public for the sake of its own power and place. Too often it has been so ; but I am sure all that is best in the churches would unite in confessing as their ruling idea that of service. If the Church oppose any movement, it should only be in obedience to a trust committed to it, and in the defence

of a principle put in its charge. No coercion, no lust of power. And let us escape from mawkish charity to remember that sometimes the best service you can render men is to combat their errors.

Three things should be clear in this connection.

1. The Church has no right absolutely to forbid the State to modify the conditions of divorce according to the expediencies of the whole practical situation.

2. The Church has a right to make and keep its own marriage laws, and it ought to be in no position where it cannot do so. Civil marriage is compulsory, but religious is optional, and it need not be used by those who refuse the conditions.

3. From the Church's point of view, and speaking generally, the chief way to deal with the admitted evils is not legal but moral, not to relax requirement but to increase power. True Christian faith

has resources of power which obviate the need of divorce. Between two people confessing Christ and serving Him in the Spirit, divorce is unthinkable, and neither Christ nor Paul contemplates it.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE

IF it were said by any that religion and the Church have little to do with marriage, it is impossible to say that Christ had little to do with it. It would be nearer historic truth to say that the subject almost fascinated Him. He was not a social reformer nor a political liberator (though nothing has been such a power in both directions as His Gospel). And yet He had very much to say of a most positive kind about the keystone of society, marriage. He said it so strongly and positively, that most people have thought He was actually legislating about it. But He was not a legislator either. He was not engrossed with its effect and value for natural society; as is shown by the fact

that, when He speaks of its permanence or its breach, He says nothing in the interest of the children, which is so vital to the social aspect of the case. He thinks of it theologically, not sociologically, as an expression of the will of God for His Kingdom, and not as a piece of natural social ethic. (For the Kingdom of God is not a thing, not a particular social fabric, but a certain common relation to Him.) If He had thought of it chiefly as a piece of general ethic, He would have been much more specific about it, considering the immense stress He laid upon it. But He treats it only in relation to the Jewish forms of it that were before Him and His public. If Jesus was a legislator, Christianity must be monkery or Tolstoiism.

A great part of the suspicion and hatred towards His Church has arisen from its mistake in thinking that His principle for His ideal Kingdom was legislation for general society. But He was not legislat-

ing even for His Church ; which is not identical with the Kingdom any more than with natural society, and which did not yet exist. And if He was not legislating, the Church has much freedom in applying His great principles to a particular age and stage. But His ideal principle is very clear. He *was* arrested upon this idea of marriage, and upon what I have called the sacramental significance of it. He was the legatee of the great spiritual tradition of His nation, which (with great tenderness often) regarded the national relation to God as wedlock, and treated public apostasy as adultery. Marriage was the point where God most closely touched man, so far as social ordinances were concerned ; just as Christ Himself was that point so far as the soul was concerned. We see then how little wonderful it is when Paul treats Christian marriage as the great natural and social symbol of Christ. Paul's ideal

attitude was but the continuation of Christ's own. And it was slowly revolutionary for the world's idea of marriage.

I cannot go into much detail as to the Christian view of marriage, nor at all into its spiritual symbolism of Christ's relation to His Church. I am more concerned with the Christian ethic of it as an institution for men than with its spiritual suggestiveness in our relation to God. It must be clear that the Church, as the trustee of the Gospel, is bound always to have much to say, and especially to its own members, on the subject. And to repudiate its every interference as a piece of ecclesiastical intrusion is mere journalese.

I will only mention the chief points of the Christian position.

1. *Christian marriage is monogamy*

Polygamy, in principle, and as an institution, is licentious. I say nothing of practice in particular cases. There

is, of course, the ready remark that in the Old Testament polygamy was permitted and practised, even to the extent that it was not wholly extirpated in Christ's time. And the one and final reply is this: The entire drift, and, you might almost say, a leading purpose, of the Bible history is to show that, when we read the cases in the context of the whole, its consequences are not only unsocial, but disastrous and tragic. It is always shown by the event (though the Bible does not lecture about it) to be a family bane, the source of sin, crime, and ruin. Polygamy is fatal to moral development, family life, and social peace. It is semi-barbaric. It means the slavery of woman. And it has its ground either rudely as legalising lust, or crudely as providing population. One need hardly discuss polygamy in this country, except for the fact that it comes back upon us in another form—in the successive, instead of the

simultaneous, form of temporary marriage. Of which more anon.

The plea is urged sometimes that polygamy in any kind is the natural thing, and that a monogamous restriction is unnatural, and artificial, and unreal. But there are no words in which we need more education than those that deal with the natural or the real. What do you mean by natural ? Do you mean instinctive and primitive, or evolutionary and civilised ? Have you grasped the meaning of evolution for nature ? If you mean by natural what is the original form, of course that is polygamy, not to say promiscuity. But to go back to the brute is not to be natural. The doctrine of evolution has knocked on the head those social theories which began by imagining an aboriginal state of nature and went on striving back to it, either as it was in Eden or anywhere else.

The natural is what corresponds with the line and tendency of evolution, of civilisation; the unnatural is what thwarts that process. And the whole natural history of society has been the process of evolution, by a costly struggle, from conditions polygamous to conditions monogamous. And we may take it as a social dogma that the welfare of any community is bound up essentially with the canonisation of monogamous marriage. Monogamy is the index of civilisation. That is the true nature of society, the nature which, through all its history, has been working to the top, where civilisation, through Christianity, has now fixed it.

Monogamy is not a mere social convention. Even if it were but that, it would still be of the greatest value and authority. It represents the upward struggle of millenniums in the civilisation of the race,

a struggle so great and stubborn that it is not at an end yet, even in our Western civilisation. Prostitution is the lees and dregs of polygamy. But monogamy is more than a social achievement. It rests on a deep and commanding moral base. The material side of love is real enough, it is imperious enough, and it has of course its proper place and sacramental value for true love. But that place and value is one which must retire more and more to the rear as love grows more and more love. By the very course of nature it does in age. When true love is once set alight, the flame, or the beauty, may go out that kindled it. The material base is more and more mastered by the moral and spiritual fellowship, by the real communion of heart and soul which is the great personal purpose of marriage.

The purpose of love's union is the mutual and practical culture of character in all fine and intimate moral growth.

Without this the sensuous side, in any personality which rises above the brutes by having a moral nature and destiny, is mere sin. What follows ? Surely this, that love may not be spent on the opposite sex as a sex. That would justify the widest and wildest licence. It can only be morally spent on a single personality. For each the other *is* the sex in this regard. Only so is moral culture by its means possible. Multitude makes soul-communion and moral interaction impossible. It means debasement. And the ethic which sings of a Don Juan as being false to every woman but always true to love, is literary blackguardism.

The same principle prescribes also the lifelong permanence of marriage. All relations which are but temporary in their nature defy, in various degrees, the principle that passion is there for the uses and ideals of the moral soul. And such relations are a crime against an ideal

Humanity no less than a holy God. A complete Humanity rests on men and women who do not simply fuse in passion, but who grow into each other in sacrifice as only souls can. And that again rests on a moral equality of the sexes, which is possible only if they are not identical but complementary. The rights are equal but not the same. Man and wife are one flesh as one spiritual personality; one not by an outward bond or promise merely, but by each being the other's inner complement. They interpenetrate. They make up a joint personality by the harmony of an indelible psychic difference. And this dual, or complex, personality (the family idea) is the base of the corporate unity of society. And it is the point of attachment for those great spiritual analogies which connect Christ so intimately with a human society in the Church.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE—CONTINUED

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE —CONTINUED

2. *Christian marriage is indissoluble*

HERE the Christian law, in so far as it is a law, and in so far as the ideal society of Christ is concerned, is absolute. I more than doubt if the exception imbedded in Christ's words about divorce is genuine. The whole tone of the Sermon on the Mount is absolute, and does not deal in exceptions. It does not touch the region of casuistry. The exception is mentioned only in Matthew. And moreover, as Christ was speaking of His ideal Kingdom, He could not think of πορνεία there, and therefore could not except it. The point is a difficult one,

however ; and, if we took a text alone to settle the question, we could not be dogmatic. We could not dogmatise morally (as society does about marriage) on the basis of a fine point of criticism.

If, however, infidelity *were* a ground for divorce, it is not the only ground. St. Paul allows it for malicious desertion by a Pagan spouse (1 Cor. vii. 15). And it should, for Christians, be equally a ground on both sides, having regard to the spiritual equality secured by Christ for the woman on grounds which are at the mercy of no texts. That, of course, is not in Christ's express teaching, which, here as elsewhere, moves formally in the lines of Oriental jurisprudence or custom, and does not speak of the woman's rights. But it is in Christ's principle and Gospel. The case of slavery is analogous. The New Testament does not destroy it, but its Gospel does. So Christ did not say the Oriental position of the woman in marriage

was slavery, but He destroyed it. And, another thing: the more you make marriage indissoluble, the more you must press the Christian duty of forgiveness for lapse, and of restoration, unless the sin become a habit; then separation, whether divorce or not.

But the chief practical ground for the indissolubility of marriage among the people of Christ is this, that Christianity opens moral resources which enable men and women to overcome the difficulties and disillusions of married life. The Church law of divorce ought to be more exigent than the State's, because the Church provides more resources for averting it, and it can never be but an extreme step when all else has failed. For, even in the fading of young passion, even amid some disillusion, the relation ripens to become a very intimate aspect of Christian love. Christianity provides for its true disciples a resource whereby Christian love

so schools the character and temper that, when the romance is gone that played too great a part, a kindly life is possible still, in which indeed a new and deeper affection may grow up. That happens in nature for the children's sake; where there are no children it should happen in grace for Christ's sake.

And if the growth of wickedness on one side went so far that there was nothing but separation for it, then the same spiritual resource is at our disposal, if we will, to make solitude tolerable, however hard. In a truly Christian Church there would be means of much alleviating the solitude. The precepts of Christ, especially in the Sermon, were for those who had such resources, especially in Himself; and they were not for those who stood no higher than the moral plane of the public or the State. The Church, therefore, cannot be so lax here as the State.

Moses, the statesman, permitted divorce because of the hardness of the public heart. That phrase does not mean heartlessness, nor what we mean by hardness, *i.e.* brutality of feeling, nor overt hostility to God and His rule. That was not Israel's case. It means moral backwardness, an inferior stage of moral culture. In this respect what is possible to a constitutional state, where law represents the moral average and not the moral aristocracy, is always behind the principle of the spiritual society. So long as natural egoism and self-pleasing is unbroken, the indissolubility of marriage cannot be carried out. Burdens greater than the bearing power make ruin. The absolute indissolubility of marriage is a principle only in the region of Christian obedience and Christian power. Christian ethic is not possible without a common Christian faith ; and for such faith there is no other ethic. Indissolubility is only the

principle of the society whose existence is obedience to Christ, and of that society, moreover, in the ideal and exigent stage in which Christ always saw it—as in children He beheld their angel and destiny ever before the Father's face.

The ethic of the Church must always seem exacting to the ethic of the State. And the Church must keep its ideal clear, if it is to educate the State in such matters, even at the cost of seeming to be somewhat stiff. The State must be popular, the Church need not, and often must not. The standard of the State is not the standard of the Church ; and neither part has the right to *force* its standard directly on the other. The Church certainly ought to be in no position which compels it to accept the lower standard of the courts. And, of course, it ought in all circumstances to refuse to marry again the offender of a divorced pair.

But I shall be asked about the treat-

ment of the injured party in the case. That makes a great difficulty from the Church's point of view. Christ says nothing about the injured party any more than He does about the children; which shows that He was not legislating, but illustrating a moral ideal. He does not say, 'It is my will that marriage in my Kingdom should be indissoluble.' He says that the spiritual conditions of His ideal Kingdom are such that the dissolution of marriage is never called for. The solvent influences are either not there, or, if they arise, they are submerged and transmuted by Christian love. The conditions of divorce do not exist in His Kingdom. He was not legislating, as I insist. No legislator could ignore such large factors in the case as the children especially. And the Church found it could not, as soon as it began to legislate on the family very early in its career.

As Christ Himself taught once from a

child, so the children became His means of teaching the Church what marriage should be in practice. The interests of the children implied much about the parents and their marriage, and they corrected much in the conception of marriage where isolated and literalised *dicta* misled. Certain passages of Paul, for instance, make such correction. In the interests of the children the casuistry of the Church had to both keep and modify the absoluteness of Christ's ideal. And, moreover, all the New Testament regulations were conceived under the influence of the expected and near *parousia*, when all existing relations should be dissolved.

Considering, further, that Christ's words referred only to arbitrary dismissal by the man, and not to the solemn decision of a court of justice (which did not exist for such cases), they should no more be applied to that decision than "Swear not" applies to oaths in court, or "Thou shalt not

kill" to judicial executions. We have three grades of moral attainment—the State, the Church, and the Kingdom of God; and what Christ had in view was the Kingdom, and the ideal Kingdom, which in both State and Church was but in the making. It was only in the ideal Kingdom, or under such individual relation to Himself as should one day be universal in the Kingdom, that the spiritual conditions were present which made marriage absolutely permanent till it was absorbed in the divine purpose.

I should therefore find it very hard to refuse as a minister to re-marry the innocent party. And I should find one line of guidance in another part of Christ's teaching. A second marriage after the death of the other partner is not forbidden, either by Christ, or the Apostles, or the Church. What Christ says about the relations of the married in the other world seems to refer not to the continu-

ance, but only to the exclusiveness of the relation. That, He taught, ceased, though *all* relation did not. The exclusiveness of the relation ceased ; and that is what infidelity destroys. What is destroyed by infidelity is that which is also destroyed by death—the exclusiveness. The relation itself could only be totally destroyed by complete oblivion, which is impossible in either case if moral growth is to go on in another life at all. Hence, if the second marriage of the survivor is lawful after death, it is similarly lawful to the moral survivor after the other's death by infidelity and divorce.

Could the Church recognise a civil divorce for other reasons than infidelity, say for incompatibility ? On the whole, no. But the difficulty is immense, having regard to the fact that there is no sharp line that man can draw between Church and world, and that in all the churches there are multitudes on the lower level,

which must be treated with some reference to its moral power. For the ideal Church, where all are in complete relation with Christ and filled with the Spirit, marriage of course is indissoluble. Divorce is always a confession of defective Christianity. But we are not at that high stage. The nation certainly is not, as we have had to recognise. But the Church also is not. The actual Church is not. The Church is not yet the Kingdom. The hardness of heart, the moral backwardness, is not confined to a churchless public. And it is mere purism to act as if it were. The whole Church (like the Christian personality itself) is but *being made*; and the same is true of the ideal marriage even within the Church.

Within the Church we have to deal with moral conditions far short of the ideal (but certain) consummation of the Kingdom of God, which I have said and not any actual church, was in Christ's eye as He spoke. And the steps to reach

it, at each growing stage, were at the discretion of the Spirit, which guides the Church in the wisest way to that end. Perfect Christian marriages may be few, but they are prophetic. And what is required at any stage is that nothing be done to surrender the ideal principle, and everything which on the whole promotes it. That cannot always be done by a *non possumus*.

Within the Christian pale there are many degrees of spiritual attainment and moral culture. And what is called for is not an iron law, which is not congenial to any idealism, or any nurture, but a principle which, with a changeless flexibility, has in itself the power also to educate men up to itself. It has to be opportunist in order to make itself in the end absolute—so long as it is educative, preserves its identity in its condescension, and does not vanish in mere opportunism. I speak of another than a mere tactical op-

portunism. I mean the opportunism of sympathy which goes lovingly down, not to stay down, but to lift up—the opportunism in which Christ emptied and humbled Himself in the Incarnation. The ideal principle rears the ideal community, and issues from its ideal Head.

Paul did not feel prevented, in dealing with his infant churches, from meeting the actual situation in a casuist way; in doing which he allows a freedom that Christ was not called on expressly to name —though Paul also spoke about marriage, the Church, and Christ, things so lofty as we find in Ephesians. He had to deal with actual cases, with what would now be called mixed marriages, between a Christian and a Pagan. And he allows deliberate desertion to be a ground of freedom there (1 Cor. vii. 9), though he did not as between two Christians. Paul had to legislate for the Church as Christ had not

—for special cases in it at least. And he uses the flexibility of the spirit and not the stiffness of the letter. He was not preaching *sub specie eternitatis*, but acting as a casuist—episcopally and not apostolically. And so the Church at every historic stage must act—spiritually, flexibly, justly, with no infallibility in the application, but only in the principle.

To-day also the Church has to decide how to apply Christ's principle in a Pauline way. It has to decide, the pastor may be any day called to decide, if he will marry the innocent and suffering party of a divorced pair, where the conduct of the other has put him outside the Christian pale, and shown him to be a Pagan and, worse, an apostate. And I am bound to say, so far as my judgment goes, that, while I am not, of course, bound to marry anybody, and am free to be guided by the circumstances of particular cases after due inquiry, I do not feel that, as a

minister of the Church, I am prohibited from complying with the request. I none the less respect the scruples of those who feel they are forbidden.

In any case divorce is an extreme, a confession of failure, and everything possible must first have been tried. The one thing is that the Church should only make such concessions as keep its ideal clear and let it act slowly on the public. Every concession has to be in the final interest of the Christian ideal, and not merely of the public convenience. And the question is whether the only means of doing so is for the Church to set its face against divorce in all circumstances, or whether the witness can be faithfully borne amidst a certain degree of practical flexibility. The answer differentiates two great conceptions of the Church. One thing is certain, the Church could not agree to recognise divorce by consent. That would be allowing the parties to be judges in their own

case. And it would practically introduce temporary marriage, and reduce it to concubinage. To that point I must return.

On the whole, probably the Church should stiffen the ideal as the State relaxes practice in this matter of divorce. It is quite possible that good utilitarian reasons should be shown for some careful extension of legal divorce. That is for the public and for Parliament, at their own moral level. But every such step confesses that we are, *protanto*, not a Christain nation. And the Church must be free to live by her own Lord, her own light, and her own principles in the matter. (See p. 54.)

There is a difficulty in the way of state relaxation which many feel, and which has been pressed on me by an eminent prelate. We have raised the State to a certain approximation to the Christian moral ideal; are we to allow it, even to encourage it, to go back by extending

facilities for divorce ? The answer is two-fold. First, that the State may have been led to legislate by Church ideals ahead of the moral resources with which the Church has supplied it, and therefore the present law may do more harm in causing illicit unions than it would do in dissolving the licit. The retreat would be strategic. Or second, if the law was not ahead of the moral sense of the voters of its day, society *has* gone back. Our moral education has not kept pace with the growth of civilisation, and the law is inadequate to the moral conditions that prevail now. You can keep down the number of divorces, but perhaps at the cost of increasing married misery and demoralisation, to the great damage of family and society.

Especially have we changed in this respect, that we can no longer treat Christ's precepts as imperious social legislation for the public, nor even as legisla-

tion for a Church, which did not then exist; but they must be regarded as guidance for those who fulfilled their conditions by such a personal relation to Him as makes a true Church. "All men cannot receive this saying, only those to whom it is given." And given them not merely by nature, but by the Holy Spirit's effect in their spiritual power.

In all this I feel how much easier it would be to dogmatise on a word of Christ's than to apply the changeless principle of His Gospel with His wisdom to the actual moral situation of each hour.

*** Note to p. 52. So long, that is, as an Established Church do not punish with social ostracism those whom it cannot repel from Communion for obeying the law of the land.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE—CONTINUED

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE—CONTINUED

3. *As Ethical (the Object of Marriage)*

AS to the *object of marriage*, nobody, when contemplating marriage, ought to be thinking about its object. That would be a piece of pedantry. People marry because they must, not because they should; because they like each other, and not because they owe a duty to the public, or even to the ideal. I do not offer advice to those about to marry, or those who want to marry. We are discussing an institution, not John or Elizabeth—though I confess, in the by-going, I find John and Elizabeth more

interesting than institutions which are more valuable.

We are asking what is the function of marriage in the order of things. If we looked no wider or deeper than the elementary necessities of the State, we should say it was to provide population, to carry on both the nation and the race. But men and women are much more than pawns in the State. A man is much more than a case of the race; he is not like a single copy of a book, whose damage or destruction would not affect the book at all. And the most populous state, were it on no higher level than population, would only mean multitudinous degeneracy, a "populous No."

We have to face the question why the race should go on, and to meet it with a moral answer. Both State and family are there for moral objects. All the great institutions of society are there in the long run for the development

of moral personality. And marriage especially has this for its end—the education of the moral soul, private and public, the production of a race worth multiplying. To marry for that purpose is priggery. If marriage has not that effect, it is a failure.

Marriage is there for the conquest of that elemental egoism which is such a useful servant and such a fatal master. In plainer language, but less exact, it is there to educate people out of their native selfishness and impatience. Not that it has that effect on all, though it is all that some have to do that for them. We can have the egoism of the couple, or of the family. We may have met cases where the members of the family were not serving society, but made a close ring, or a hard ball, in the midst of society and against it. Their object was to lay society under tribute to the family, as far as possible. It was family booty.

And their conduct had the maternal note of believing, and trying to make others believe, that there was no such family in the world.

Living for one's own family alone has been said to be no better than living for one's own health. But it is not quite as bad as that. When we have had our amusement out of that spectacle, we should remember that the family affections and prejudices are all that the poor people had between them and absolute egoism. You have Burns, with a judgment which goes to a finer form of the extreme, saying:

> "To make a happy fireside clime
> For weans and wife—
> That's the true pathos and sublime
> Of human life."

But that is no more true than the other extreme. Life has issues far more grand and moving than domesticity. But if it is an error, it is a very wholesome one.

There is a lower depth even than familism. It is where one member of the family makes even his family tributary to his own egoism; and he goes out of life having learned nothing from it but that he is a self, and not a mere thing—yet only a centripetal self so far, a self whose next stage must be a severe reconstruction on a new centre. Egoism cannot bear egoism. Two of a trade cannot agree. And two egoisms mean one divorce.

The question is asked, among some of the Socialists for instance, if marriage be a private or a social affair. Some would say of it, as of religion, that it is *Privatsache*; and all that society has to do is to relieve the parents from the care of the children, and to bring these up in public nurseries (which would more properly be described as infantry barracks). But marriage is neither a wholly private nor a wholly public interest. It turns upon personal affection, but (as we have seen)

it has some of its greatest effects and purposes far beyond personal happiness. Happiness may only be sought under moral conditions. No one has a right to happiness who knows nothing of obedience, and cares nothing. No happiness should be without responsibility—latent at least. And especially it is responsible to the society which makes happiness secure by its order and shelter.

Marriage means family cares. It means the wise sacrifice of the parents to the children, and the wise service to society of both as a family. The family not only provides citizens, but, what is far more, a school of citizenship. Citizens are made, and not only born. The social question is far greater than the population question. It concerns the moral quality that is reared in the population. And the first school of this is the family. It has to make not simply men, but fellow men. And nothing can do this like family

life. Homes which are mere firms for the couple, or hotels to the young people, are of less than no social value. They must be centres of moral culture: of culture not in ethics, but in personality, and in its growth by fidelity, service, and sacrifice. Citizens must be reared by those who contribute them; and that can only be in the moral atmosphere of family life, and not in the unstable climate of mere brotherhoods, nor in the rough and tumble of partisan conflicts or faction fights.

The children are there not simply to be a motive for family industry as heirs of the family property, but to be worthy agents of social production. They are not legatees of the family estate when it is cut up, but heirs of the best moral culture that family life represents; a culture that is not cut up as it is multiplied, but is the grand patrimony and growing unity of the race. The child is neither the mere reversionary of the family estate

nor a piece of it. He is a soul entrusted to the family, to the parents especially, to be reared to freedom moral and religious. *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia semper.* Yes, *semper.*

The Fifth Commandment is very necessary now, because respect for parents is in decay. But why is it in decay? Because the commandment has a converse. Honour thy boy and girl that their days may be strong in the land the Lord thy God giveth thee. Parents ought to honour their children, and not merely fondle them, and not merely maintain them, and not merely punish them. Because that aspect of the matter has been neglected, parents need to be taught to honour the child, whom they too often treat with the extremes both of neglect and indulgence, as a nuisance or a darling. Some families would be more valuable if they had more mutual respect, even at the cost of some superfluous affection.

Considering the effect of marriage on the moral nature both of parents and, especially, of children, it comes home to us that the marriage question is really a part of the education question. Generation and education are morally inseparable. The parent is the chief moral teacher. The family is not merely a coupler, but a transmitter; not only a link between the generations, but the living vehicle to the future of all the best moral wisdom which such parentage gathers from the past. It is in our children that the best of all we have been made by experience lives on for the future.

From the religious point of view the object and effect of marriage is very great and deep. Nothing goes so deep, except contact with Christ Himself, in the shaping and toning of the soul. This takes place in countless subtle ways, many of them below the surface of our immediate consciousness; but there come times and

crises when these subliminal secrets of the heart are revealed. But I do not dwell on that, because it is perhaps more appropriate to the pulpit, where it might oftener appear. And I have already touched it.

It might be added here that from this moral standpoint the medieval view of woman was defective, and its chivalry semi-barbarous. It represented an idolatry rather than a service, a passion rather than an affection, an erotic (as I put it) rather than an ethic. And we find its hollow interior illustrated in the double morality still found in connection with the medieval survival of militarism, where the treatment of one class of women is a sheer pharisaism compared with that of another.

THE MATTER OF SUBORDINATION

CHAPTER VI

THE MATTER OF SUBORDINATION

IT is impossible to speak of the Christian idea of marriage without taking some note of the woman's subordination which seems to be involved in it, and which is resented by so many. The resentment need not surprise us in an age when revolt has taken the place among the virtues which used to be held by the other extreme of resignation.

In this connection I would make the following observations.

1. Our moral principles as Christians must flow far less from precepts than from the revealed nature of the Christian God. Our moral foundations are in the holy mountain; all our springs are in

Him. Now the nature of that God is Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. Father and Son co-exist, co-equal in the Spirit of holiness, *i.e.* of perfection. But Father and Son is a relation inconceivable except the Son be obedient to the Father. The perfection of the Son and the perfecting of His holy work lay, not in His suffering, but in His obedience. And, as He was Eternal Son, it meant an eternal obedience ; for the supreme work of Christ, so completely identified with His person, could not be done by anything which was not as eternal as His person.

But obedience is not conceivable without some form of subordination. Yet in His very obedience the Son was co-equal with the Father ; the Son's yielding will was no less divine than the Father's exigent will. Therefore, in the very nature of God, subordination implies no inferiority. It is as divine as rule, for it is self-subordination on an infinite scale ;

it is not enforced. It is sacrifice, it is not mere resignation. It is no slavery, but willing service. And if man is to be holy as He is holy, our self-subordination to each other is not necessarily inferiority, nor need obedience be slavery. There is an obedience bound up with the supreme dignity of Christian love, so that where most love is, there also is most obedience.

So little is it true when Kant says that for moral purposes it is indifferent whether we believe in a Trinitarian God or a Unitarian. For the individual it may matter less, but for society it means much whether self-subordination is intrinsically divine and truly God-like.

2. In some things the man is subordinate. In the earliest nurture of the child he is quite subordinate, and the mother has a great start of the father in moulding those first years to which our last come

circling round in such an affecting and influential way.

3. Objection is taken to the precept of wifely submission in Eph. v. 22. "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord."

Now, one might first ask whether the happiest and most influential homes are not, on the whole, those where this principle reasonably prevails. But leaving that, I offer these remarks:

(1) What a woman's heart and her interest crave is love much more than lead; and the same passage teaches the man to love his wife at least as much as himself, *i.e.* with his whole self.

(2) The verse before urges the members of the Church to submit themselves to each other in the fear of God. So that the precept to the wife is no more than a particular application of the general precept given to every Christian, male or

female ; which therefore enjoins also due submission in its own kind of the Christian husband to the Christian wife. It means mutual and complementary forbearance, concession, courtesy, sacrifice.

(3) The submission is as to the Lord. That is to say, it is under those moral conditions which inhere in the Christian principle, and which forbid the love of rule and pre-eminence for its own wilful sake. It is not clear that absolute obedience is enjoined to a domineering tyrant. The husband contemplated is head only in a sense analogous to that in which Christ is head, *i.e.* in the spirit, not of right or power, but of love and sacrifice. And the husband contemplated is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, by *giving himself* for it. If the wife give herself to the husband, an equal obligation to give himself is created for the husband, if their love endure in the higher love of Christ common to both.

4. And this leads to the recognition of limits to the submission. It could not go to the length of renouncing Christ at the husband's call if he were a Pagan and a bigot (1 Cor. vii. 15). And if the Pagan husband desert his wife, she is not bound to him any more. She is free. It is not unqualified obedience. It is not absolute. Therefore it is not slavery. It is submission under the conditions of the Church and the Kingdom, and especially under the conditions of love which has service for its principle.

5. The wifely obedience which was normal in Judaism and Paganism is taken up and kept, but it is also put on such a new base as applies it equally to both parties, and transforms it from an outward law to a willing sympathy. Service and sacrifice become now, in Christ crucified, the divine and common principle of love, in which the wife is invited to lead. What

is the objection to the woman leading in sacrifice, as the divine principle of moral dignity, in the cross, as the natural expression of love in practice, and as the divinest principle of life? Why should the Christian woman not aim at being advanced in a common yielding in Christ?

6. This spirit of service and sacrifice is a most needful thing to turn the stoic into the Christian, the moral egoist into the humane brother.

To-day we are much preoccupied with the cult of Personality, the religion which cuts ethic off from religion, and reduces the Church to an ethical society. Many people are obsessed, in forms coarse or fine, by their own personality and what is due to it. Accordingly they are the victims of recalcitrance, or of self-respect, or of self-realisation. Their supreme duty is that which they consider they owe to the integrity and independence of their

own individuality, and especially to their moral personality. Their principle is moral self-culture, and everything is subordinated to that. Even their sacrifice has its eye on that. It is moral egoism. It is done to promote their moral development; for the good of what they consider their soul.

It is an aim that needs conversion. It would make society not a fraternity in any sense, but a conglomerate of moral atoms bursting with self-respect, who have taken up their moral culture as a profession in life.

This frame of mind may or may not need to be well shaken, but it does need to be Christianised in order to be really moralised. It is an insufferable excellence till it is converted, till its eye is taken off its moral self and all the priggery of it, and people are taught to leave their prickly independence, to save their soul by losing it, and find themselves by forgetting themselves.

7. It may be asked whether the spirit of true obedience and subordination, of being forward to serve, does violence to woman's nature, and prevents her finding her true self. In so far as that nature is different from man's, does it suffer, is it perverted, by having service for its first principle ? Is it prevented from coming to itself ? Are the most willing, courteous, serviceable, devoted women, spoiled women ? Do we shrink from women of that temper, as if they were traitors to their sex and nature ? There are women we shrink from, but are they these ? The higher woman is, the higher is her freedom. If it is claimed that she is finer than man, so much the finer is her freedom. But the high and fine kind of freedom comes in service and by it. And, if woman is normally at her highest and finest in marriage, if it is the married and not the single that is the type of the sex, and gives its law and freedom, her freedom as a sex must stand

on such pre-eminent sacrifice as is there. That is the line on which a woman finds her true self. And that is the line of her true leadership. The last shall be first.

8. It may be said that this obedient spirit in women marked but an early and cruder stage, even in Christianity, and that it was destined to be shed, and to fall away like slavery, as Christianity came to itself. The answer is that the case of slavery is not analogous. The principle of any human creature being the absolute property of another is quite fatal to Christianity, and must be outgrown. But nowhere in the New Testament is woman regarded as property, and certainly not in marriage. Wherever she is so regarded, Christianity must bring a radical change. In so far as woman's position anywhere is slavery Christianity must alter it.

But service, obedience, is not slavery, except where people at any age have not

outgrown their teens. And to lead in sacrifice is the true eminence in Christ, *i.e.* in the last moral resort. Sacrifice is the man's Christianity as well as the woman's, if there be neither male nor female in Christ but both. The Christian form of subordination is sacrifice, which is the genius of love, a woman's glory more than her hair, and the very kingly heart of Christ. The promise to obey is but the promise of the sacrifice which love cannot help, if it seek not its own, is kind, does not behave itself unseemly, and never fails.

Womanhood always suffers where duties are postponed to rights, service to aggression, and sacrifice to assertion. And to sneer at such a valuation of moral powers is to despise Christ and renounce the cross.

LEASEHOLD MARRIAGE

A newspaper has recently appeared among us, which is largely advertised in the streets, and has, I am told, a growing circulation. It is written by women of high education, who, generally speaking, sign their names to what they write. The paper shows, in some respects, conspicuous ability, and is, I believe, eagerly read. The doctrine of the economic independence of women, which is everywhere part and parcel of the suffrage movement, leads, in the case of this ably written paper, to strange results. Motherhood outside marriage, by means of temporary unions for the purpose; its formal recognition by society, and the conditions on which the "new maids" of the future will claim and enforce it; arguments against the "immoral" permanence of marriage; complete freedom of union, under the guidance of passion, between men and women; and other speculations and contentions with regard to the relations of the sexes—especially in the letters from correspondents—such as could not be reproduced in your columns; these matters and the handling of them shed a flood of light on certain aspects of the "woman's movement." This newspaper does not stand alone, nor are these aspects a mere negligible quantity.—*From a letter by Mrs. Humphry Ward in the "Times" of June* 19, 1912.

CHAPTER VII

LEASEHOLD MARRIAGE

THERE are two chief phases of the marriage question as a public or parliamentary question. One I have touched—divorce. The other raises issues much more dangerous. It is the question of the legalisation of terminable or probationary unions: what have been called leasehold marriages. These are really no more than partnerships at will. It is pleaded that, as marriage is primarily a matter of consent, the consent is terminable. The same consent that makes, breaks. If people can agree to come together, they can agree to part. And it is urged they should often part for the good of the soul in either case, or,

as it would be put, in the interest of the free moral personality. The arrangement may end at the instance of either side—with due provision, as the law might determine, for the offspring.

As if anything could be a due provision for children but the joint and loving care of the parents! How should you expect a child to feel, how do you think its moral growth would be affected by its feeling, towards a parent that had passed through several hands, either before or after its birth? And what is the exact idea? Is it monogamy while it lasts? Or may either party have another brief *ménage* going on at the same time?

This is an idea which has a far larger hold of cultivated but non-Christian society than we are often allowed to realise. Abroad, the propaganda has gone much farther than with us, and especially its advocacy by women in the interest of unwedded motherhood, deliberate and

legalised—the right to a child. But you cannot see much of such society, in this country also, without perceiving how attractive the notion is to many of both sexes to-day. I observed, lately, that the most aggressive German book in this interest was advertised in an English translation.

If more facility for divorce is pressed in the interest of the poorer classes, this is often urged in the interest of the better-to-do, whose fortune, leisure, and half-culture make their tastes more vagrant, and their independence of society more easy and assertive. The plea begins by recognising the difficulties and even tragedies which we all admit in connection with marriages unhappy and yet indissoluble. It may start also with what seems a worthy concern for the dignity of love, and it urges that it is degradation when a union continues from under which the love has ebbed and fled. But its

way out of the difficulties is downwards, and not upwards. Its interest is individual (not to say selfish); it is not social. And its concern for love gravitates, for want of moral lift in it, to become facility for passion. It has more erotic than ethic. It is the ruin in the end of the moral element in love, because it is not only the ruin of the family, but it destroys the moral development of the parent's personality. For fidelity can be educated by fixity. It is not fidelity if it only last with liking.

The suggestion, of course, is absolutely unchristian, and mostly anti-Christian. It goes back—I do not here say from Christian principle, which many would reject—but from Christian civilisation, which is the greatest thing civilisation has yet achieved. And it can be met with no sympathy either from Christianity or society, except in so far as it is sometimes an honest but unprincipled effort to cope with evils which exercise us all.

I will only mention a few points of criticism.

1. It is said that it would tend to diminish vice. If it did, it would be at the cost of all the dignity that belongs to marriage by the moral element that gives the institution permanence. Besides, it is very doubtful if it would have such an effect in the long run. It is practically polygamy, only consecutive and not simultaneous. And it is a polygamy that ends at will. What kind of men and women would be manufactured at last by such an institution? The weaker sex would more and more return to its Oriental position as property; the stronger would become a pasha. It means the degradation of sexual relations; and that is both the soul and root of prostitution. It stamps woman as inferior, like all polygamy; and it brands her, like all mere passion, as a mere means, while the man is an end to himself. There is no moral

development for woman there. It is slavery. And if it is said that the woman is as free to end the relation as the man, practically that is not so. For woman is more constant than man; she clings, as man does not, to the children; and she is also handicapped for all livelihood outside the family. And so she would mostly be the victim. Always outside fixed marriage, the woman stands to be victimised most.

2. As the woman is naturally more constant than the man, it is the woman that would be the chief sufferer by such an arrangement. And in the relation of the sexes she has too much to suffer as it is. The proposal reverts to the pre-Christian idea of woman. Polygamy and slavery go together, whether the polygamy be consecutive or simultaneous. Monogamy for life is a great evolution in the interest of the weaker sex, out of poly-

gamous conditions, whose mischief is the divided interest of the man in the woman.

Besides, prostitution is largely due to the great change in social conditions which prevents marriage. Let these be altered, even at much cost to the existing order, but do not let the marriage idea be debased. Facilitate the better distribution of the fruits of industry, promote economic independence, and make marriage more possible. Reduce the standard of luxury in women, and cultivate a simpler life. This change is certainly very great, but it is far less than the change we discuss. Our evils cannot be cured by tampering with the sanctity of marriage. As has been said, "You do not cure theft by abolishing property."

I have described leasehold marriage as polygamy, only polygamy successive and not simultaneous. And I should like to add here that, as between the two forms of polygamy, it is the successive

that is more deadly to society, because it is more destructive to family life. Islam is more stable than a society of legalised *liaisons* would be; yet Islam is less for Humanity than Israel, because of the very different position of the wife. Nothing but permanent monogamy is compatible with family life and all it means for society.

The demand for a relaxation of the marriage bond, and especially for terminable marriages is largely promoted by the selfish and vagrant influence of the man at the cost of woman. And it is the woman's interest that is protected by the dignity and fixity of marriage, in so far as the two interests are put in competition.

We may perhaps look at it in this way: The growth of Humanity is twofold—in quantity and in quality. On the one hand the race grows in numbers and is prolonged in time; on the other hand

it grows in power, resource, civilisation, culture. On the one hand it spreads over the face of the earth, in space, and extends through history, in time; on the other it dilates, so to say, it becomes ampler, fuller, richer in mental mastery and spiritual content. It is fruitful, multiplies, and replenishes the earth; and it acquires more and more dominion over the creatures. It grows in size, and it grows in civilisation.

Now, each of these forms of growth means burden, labour, and sorrow. But the burden of the one falls chiefly on the woman, and the burden of the other on the man. On the woman chiefly falls the burden of population, on the man chiefly that of civilisation. I am speaking of the chief stress, observe. And, in the matter of continuing the race, the chief burden falls on the woman. It is upon the one organism rather than the other that

nature lays the labour and sorrow in this respect. And it is the woman therefore that requires special consideration in the institutions that have most to do with the continuity of the race. The institution which has charge of this in particular is marriage. And the only form of marriage which really harmonises the two functions, and specially protects and compensates the woman in her function, is fixed and monogamous.

Monogamy organised, guarded, and sanctified by Church and State is in the woman's interest especially. She has most to lose in the slackening of it. To tamper with it is to unroof the fabric in which maternity has its shelter. It is a suicidal thing that the male interest, which makes for the race's power, should promote an ethic which destroys the female interest of the race's continuation; that the male interest of power should acquire the vice of power—selfishness—at the cost

of the female interest of existence, and the sacrifice it entails. If the powerful man discourage monogamy in the interest of his selfishness he is pulling down the house in which alone even power can continue to live and grow.

It is often said that women live in the moment, and that it is men who have the sense of implicates and consequences; that women are engrossed with particulars and personalities, and men look before and after to universals and to general justice. But here, at least, the case is otherwise. The man lives in the moment, it is the woman that lives in the world of consequences. And it is the woman, therefore, that has the prime interest in that social morality which compels the instinct of the moment to come under the obligations created by consequences. Monogamy is the charter of maternity, the bridle on vagrant selfishness, the shelter of the weak, the stay of the fickle, and

the one institution for converting erotic chaos into a moral order of society.

And the lamentable, dreadful fact that so many women are forward to promote terminable marriage, or even single maternity, is really a tribute to the social security that permanent monogamy has given. Monogamous marriage has sunk so deep into society, and made the position of women so secure, that such advocates can form no idea of what society would be, especially for their sex, if their programme got its head. They do not know life. The sex, which has such experience of consequences, has little imagination for consequences; and these women cannot envisage the situation their theories would produce. They sap marriage under the shelter of its roof. And they can only be forgiven (as one says) because they know not what they do.

3. It is said that it is motherhood that

is holy, not wifehood. But I shall shortly show that under this system motherhood must either cease or suffer. I only say here two things. First, that the revolt of the sex means revolt against wifehood rather than motherhood, because the man and woman make a claim on each other's egoism which is not made by the child. The child can even flatter it, as needing a protector ; but the spouse certainly limits it. And, if the worst evil be thought to be such limitation of egoism, wifehood is sure to be resented. Second, all motherhood is not holy. To say that it is, is a piece of sentimental naturalism belonging to the inferior fiction, and leading us to a social morass. Some motherhood should be the object of deep compassion and kindness, but not of respect—as the fatherhood in it deserves a social scourge. No society can be founded or maintained upon the pity which is so precious in our private and personal relations.

THE WOMAN'S PROTEST

CHAPTER VIII

4. THE WOMAN'S PROTEST

BUT it is not only the best interests of the woman that protest against these terminable marriages, but her finest instincts. Whatever may be the case with individuals, all that is most womanly in the sex turns against such ethic. The delicacy and dignity of woman resent it. The finer her soul is, so much the more does she measure the higher aspects of the great and unreserved committal she makes in marriage; and she feels it so much that she has courage to make it only on the foundation of a tender and sacred faith that it is for life.

A life for a life. What she gives is her whole life, her whole personality in its

most central and sacred sanctuary; and that should only be given for life. The *fixity* of marriage for life is only the social counterpart of the great spiritual *unity* of the moral personality in its sacred surrender. It is often said that marriage may be an episode for a man but for a woman it is her all. Therefore her nature demands that it be once for all.

A woman deceived in this matter has a wound that never closes. The tragedy does not go out of her life, whether she cover it or not. If she do not cover it, if she rebel, if she separate and take her way by herself, she may be smitten so inwardly and sacredly that rebellion often seems a coarse term, and public championship of injured wifehood a vulgar thing.

In a certain novel one such woman learns utterly to despise her husband, and she takes steps to free herself. A circle of her friends wish to celebrate her for her bold action, but she turns away,

stung and disgusted. "A horrible grief," says the writer, "came over her. These people had no idea of the abyss of her sorrow. The last surrender of soul and body did not mean for them the sacramental thing it did for her. Something in them must have long gone blunt and dull. Did they ever know what it meant to drop the last veil of the personality, 'laying flesh and spirit in his hands'? Everything in her rose up against them. 'It was my holy fire,' she said, 'my white flame. And to let myself be fêted about it all, to be treated as if I were but a principle—it is silly, it is mad, it is insulting. Have they no eyes to see how I suffer?'"

All that rises to such a height in womanhood, all that so finely and sacredly feels, rises also to protest against any ethic of marriage which makes it but a passionate contract instead of a sacramental union with a permanent mate.

If the true inwardness of it is so delicate and abiding for the one party, it is not less so for the other. You cannot have a double ethic here. This feeling of the woman strikes the note of the whole relation. Life-committal for both is of its essence and idea. Though, of course, at the present social stage, for the hardness of our heart, practical exigencies, due to human weakness or wickedness, may prescribe divorce carefully allowed under the sacred authority of State or Church.

But let us note clearly that it is divorce from a bond which was contemplated as permanent, which is in its idea permanent, which is permanent as an institution; whereas the legal recognition of unions terminable by consent would alter the inner nature and idea of the institution itself. It publishes to the world the conviction of society that the principle of marriage is fleeting in its nature, that it is a love which need not be expected to be lasting

or faithful. And that is a principle that could not be socially advertised without stirring up all that makes man most worthy and woman most womanly to protest and condemn. If the institution led us to think so of love, if it was based on such an idea of it, the whole conception of love would slowly sink, "half dead to know that it could die."

5. The fact is, that here the instinct of the true woman, educated by millenniums of experience of motherhood, points to the sound condition of racial welfare. The racial instinct is in her, not only purer, but truer. And the finest and subtlest feeling holds the real clue and the real power in the case. If we speak of natural selection, the secret of the truly natural selection in the continuation of the race is more vitally seized by the woman. Her instinct says that the race's renovation from generation to

generation must be taken more seriously from generation to generation, and its principle made more stable.

It may be true that women are more interested in individuals than in groups, or even principles; but it is also true that they demand the whole individual for life. And jealousy is but the seamy side of that sound instinct. A woman's affections may be individual, but her relation to that individual is properly monopolist, however free. Individual as the passion may be, she is social enough to read in the bond more than passion, a moral permanency beyond passion; and she shapes the institution for more. Her interest, her preoccupation, may be in the present; but her instinct, her presentiment, her divination, is for the future. All this means that as an institution marriage looks beyond the individual or his moods, and has its great reference to the race and its future.

But terminable marriage is based on the opposite principle. It regards the individual and not the race; and it regards the individual only on his impulsive side. It bends the institution from the service of the race to that of the individual, or even to that of his fleeting predilections. It is not ethical but erotic. Individual happiness, or even the egoism of two, is not the supreme principle of marriage. That is a principle which regards first the welfare of society and its happiness. Now the first social interest of society is the family, *i.e.* not the parents alone and their enjoyment, but the child also and sacrifice for it; not the present, but the future. Posterity does as much for the ideal society as ancestry. And the worst indictment against terminable marriage is that it breaks up this family idea. It ends in racial suicide, or, if not, it demolishes fatherhood, and to that extent damages childhood.

Nature is more mighty than man's device, and nature will secure, on the whole, that the mother clings to the child when she has agreed to part from its father, or when he discards both from his concern. Fatherhood thus goes out of the child's life, even if motherhood remains. It also goes out of the religion of a race so reared, which would be left with but a motherly God. We estimate highly, indeed, the effect of the mother on men—on great men, and all men. But has the experience of that influence been gained under the conditions now proposed—of easy desertion by the father ?

Often, it is true, the widow as mother has to do what she can to supply the lack of the father, and to magnify his name in the memory of the children. But how is she to do that for a father whom she has exchanged for another, or one who has parted with her because one or both were tired of it. It is hard to

estimate the influence of a father in the house, even if the mother do all the explicit training. And while the mother is stamped on the earliest years, the father is stamped on adolescence, and gives the child its personality among the world of men.

Besides, what removes the father in this way impairs also the care of the mother. The whole system sacrifices the child to the parents, and shows that they are not really parents but selfish erotics. (Throughout I am not using the word in the grossest sense.) For unless all children are taken to be brought up by the State in public nurseries, terminable union means that the mother is left with the children; and her natural doom of bearing them alone is prolonged into the unnatural burden of rearing them alone.

The rich, of course, could make provision as to funds for this purpose; but the change proposed rouses problems no

funds can solve. And, besides, it would not affect the rich only, and its effect must be calculated upon its working in the mass. And that would mean that the mother would be taken away from the very thing left her to do. She would have to do what is done with evil consequences in the mills—she would have to go to work merely to maintain the children she should educate. She would be cast more than ever into the economic struggle, not with other women only, but with men more or less free from her responsibilities. And either she would break down, or her training of the family would.

It is so fatal to society to tamper with the fixity of marriage, because it is most fatal to the weak elements whose defence a moral society ought to be—to the woman's womanly quality and the child's moral growth.

A CONSERVATIVE SANCTUARY

CHAPTER IX

6. A CONSERVATIVE SANCTUARY

SOCIETY, therefore, ought to be immovable in this matter. The farther in we go upon the sacred, subtle, and even sub-conscious parts of our nature, so much the nearer we come to the central shrine where the waves of change scarcely reach. We come to the diamond axis upon which all change revolves. We reach the conservative sanctuary which makes all progress safe, because it harbours and gathers in repose the creative power that makes progress at all possible. It is a region beyond the reach of our new schemes and systems, and the most sacred parts of our nature abut upon it. Upon it give those windows of our being which

open as magic casements upon mystic seas.

In this region reside the slow influences that mould us in marriage and family. These are powers that easily escape our chronic levity, and what Carlyle called our snigger at the universe. We cannot readily weigh them, for they are not entirely in the domain of our conscience; they are often beneath it. Of all social institutions in the natural realm the family is that which has the most deep and unconscious effect on us. How else is it that death and loss reveal to us in heart agony the depth of a relation which was growing up, we know not how, amid all the routines and trifles of day after day, and closing in upon our heart, as it were, with strong but transparent walls, which were for us as if they were not, till we found ourselves cut to the bone among their splinters. Amid all the happy give-and-take of common life, and

common joys, and common cares, we were being subtly bound with a network of ties which, when they are torn out, take our hearts in bleeding pieces with them.

It has taken society a very long time to grow to this discipline. Ages and ages of social evolution are registered in our submission to such fine bonds, and our lacing by such silken threads. And the fabric is as firm as the slow deposit of coral islands upon the ocean's bed, which both rise to the top and spread to each other, till an archipelago becomes a continent. You cannot trace here the swift progress you freely mark elsewhere. We are here among the great, solemn, and abiding things. So that, if ever this institution had to be changed, it would require a combination of all the best and greatest forces of the whole race, all its most spiritual forces, working from its deepest heart.

The social programme-makers are here

no more than pigmies pottering at the base of Olympus. To dissolve the great divine Triad of Father, Mother, Child, would require a force equal at least to that which has made society itself. It is far beyond the theories of social system-mongers, or the heresies of intellectuals. Monogamy is not an artificial institution forced down on mankind, but a spiritual institution rising out of it.

And, in any case, whatever changes come must be so slow as to be almost imperceptible at any one point of time. The quest is all too new and young yet to affect such hoary and venerable practice. Marriage is a far more permanent institution than any other. Nothing can affect it which is attempted from either the man's side alone or the woman's. It could be changed only from the interaction of both for their action on the child, and on the future of which the child is trustee.

Women, at least, should realise that they can do nothing in this direction by writing on erotic lines, but only by making the sex a greater and greater factor in the ethic of the race. And this they can never do by devoting themselves to love as a free passion, as an explosive under the pillars of society, but to love as a moral power carrying society; not to the love that looses, but the love that binds; not to the love that releases for enjoyment, but to the love that commits to sacrifice. And all that women win upon other fields of life will culminate and be registered in their effect upon the ethics of love. All the progress they may make has its value only as it tells for their growth in power upon the race at its centre of delicate dignity and moral taste.

The growing power of the life of love lies in the line of its moral refinement; and, if the age of chivalry and idolatry

towards women is gone, it is because we are rising to the age of a truer sanctity in women. The chivalry men feel to them can only continue if it rise, if it is uplifted by the sanctity women feel in themselves and their surrender. They must be in a position and in a mood to dwell less upon love's fantasy and more on its sanctity. They must be educated less by romances that tickle them and more by spiritual powers that rule them. And they must strengthen men in that direction. For, as one writer says, "people make too much of mere love, both in modern life and modern art; and that is at the bottom of so much of the sickliness and weakness of our time."

LOVE'S DIGNITY AND SINCERITY

CHAPTER X

7. LOVE'S DIGNITY AND SINCERITY

LEASEHOLD marriage is said to be in the interest of the *reality* of sexual relations. Under the proposed conditions people could separate without fuss when they grew incompatible and the relation became hollow. It is asked, 'Do we increase the sanctity of marriage by putting it above its truth and reality? We only create Pharisaism.'

The answer is (1) that, if marriage could be dissolved by consent, there would then be no motive to discipline those faults that easily become magnified into incompatibility. The idea of mutual discipline would not enter into marriage at all—as to so many it never does.

They plead they must be themselves, and not immolate their individuality. There would be no thought of marriage acting as a school of moral reality.

(2) The truth and reality of marriage would too easily be identified with the life of mere passion or romance; and the decay of that flush would soon become a charter for vagrancy and its hollowness.

(3) The fixity of marriage is the moral condition for converting the decay of passion into the growth of real affection, especially under Christian culture and power.

(4) Is there no Pharisaism, no unreality, when human beings, who were made with a moral nature for supremely moral issues, disguise the fact even to themselves and masquerade in a light vesture of passion or preference alone? The man supremely ruled by passion is a fraud to human nature. Man, it has been said, is more than an erotic process, and this

more means obligation, responsibility, the freedom of his soul, against the vagrancy of the moment's appetite and the slavery of chance desires. And if he ignore this, he is not only living in unreality, he is not only severed from the great moral whole which gives him his reality, but he is crumbling and hollow within, and the whole economy of his soul is going to pieces. He may pass through moral priggery to Pharisaism of his own subtle kind. It is not love that is free with him, it is not the great love, but the small passion, which dries up in its own heat. What is free is the infidelity of his egoism, and the love of impatient change. And for a man to live in that freedom is to live in a falsity and a Pharisaism to his true nature and best self.

(5) It is impossible that two legitimate forms of marriage could exist alongside without one of them being rated as inferior, and so treated in society. What

would happen if that one were permanent marriage? And if it were the other, the object of the propaganda I discuss would be lost. It wants the concubine to be as well received as the wife.

(6) The plea of the old ethic, it will have been seen, is sometimes adopted by the new. It is owned that the object of marriage is the development of the moral personality. But it is pleaded that, in a vast number of cases, life-marriage not only destroys the moral personality, but prevents a union that would develop it.

The answer is manifold, and has in part been given already.

(*a*) Reflect on the educative influence, through ages, of the idea of an institution. The idea of life-marriage not only moulds a character of self-restraint and service, but also slowly lifts through ages the idea and tone of social life.

(*b*) There are moral influences available, especially in Christianity, which can

sanctify the disappointment of many unsatisfactory marriages for both parties, and even tap a new spring of affection. The love ceasing to be instinctive passion changes into a new application of Christian love and moral kindness.

(*c*) The cure would be worse than the disease—especially so long as legal separation is possible as a remedy. It is not mere love that is the source of the moral education, but love with the moral element of fidelity—holy love. But the new ethic rests on the idea of freedom, on the mere resentment of restraint—'I must be my true, complete, and harmonious self.' That is what is known as the cult of personality turned cant. It is the morbid passion for a superior egoism. It is the Pharisaism of the new cult. As if "'twere growing like a tree, all round, that made man better be." It cultivates a forest of self-contained pines, not a society of generous men with

a boundless contiguity of shade. It is the aristocratic ethic of individual culture at any price; it is not the nobly democratic ethic which rears the individuals as members one of another. Freedom is certainly one condition of moral discipline, but the source of discipline is not freedom, but control, obedience, experience. True freedom is the effect of discipline, not its cause.

The advocates of this system seem, in some respects, to lack knowledge of the world, or the insight that interprets it. That many women are said to favour it shows it to be based largely on lack of knowledge of life. It is the fantasy of incorrigible Utopians, sheltered idealists, or inexperienced optimists.

The best that can be said for this new ethic turns upon the cult of personality. But the cult of personality without the higher cult of authority is the cult of mere self-will. And one cannot conceive

of any moral authority compatible with such free love. It can be prosecuted only by the repudiation of authority. No moral authority could sanction it, and remain an authority. No real authority could be so fatal to society as such liberty would be.

8. Leasehold marriage is fundamentally wrong because it starts from the postulate that love is in its nature a fickle thing, and it asks for deliberate and public recognition of the fact. It seeks to reorganise society in the interest of the doctrine that love is in its nature fugitive. And yet it claims to act in the name and interest of a love which fixed marriage tends to debase. Could you have a stable society on the foundation of a soluble base? We do believe that society is on a stable base on the whole, whatever revolutions may take place. But we could not continue to trust that,

if we came to think that the chief cement of society was such a poor adhesive. We should feel society was but gummed together and not built. Love is half dead when it begins by admitting, and even parading, that it can die. I have already alluded to the educative effect on the public mind of the conception of love which is imbedded in indissoluble monogamy. It is the great register of the moral progress of society.

9. It has been seen that it is a vice of the leasehold system that it tends to substitute erotic for ethic; to treat passion devoid of the moral element as the justification of a union, and even as its sanctification. And here I should like to make some very relevant protest against the extent to which the interests of the heart, whether sentimental or passionate, are allowed to monopolise the attention of the young, and form them

at the plastic time. It may be in the way of religion, or it may be in the way of literature or the drama, or it may be by social intercourse. The idea of love, which is only too ready to monopolise the years of adolescence, is encouraged, and even forced, to the destruction of intelligence on the one hand and of conscience on the other, to say nothing of reverence for love itself. Just as in religion we have a mawkish culture of charity and urbanity which makes men indifferent to either truth or justice, so you have an atmosphere of sentiment or a world of passion which fills the mind to the exclusion of the nobler and firmer concerns of character.

Jowett of Balliol protested against the extent to which the thoughts and imaginations of youth were occupied with the love interests, especially through poetry, as if nothing were really interesting to the young but the opposite sex. He was

not thinking, nor am I, of the vicious side of it. He meant the obsession by sentiment which is innocent enough, to the neglect of other and greater concerns; the hypertrophy of this side of things in both sexes, and especially in men, which destroys the virile note, puts upon religion itself a subjective and sickly cast, and destroys the force of its protest for moral issues. What is the public value of the moral protests which are raised from soft religion? Who attends to the public ethic of sweet sentimentalists? Obsession of this kind should be countered by the promotion of sport, the earnestness of education, the provision of some positive moral education, the rescue of the Universities from being mere social opportunities, the opening of careers to women, their invitation into social activities, and the dropping of the coaxing, and even coddling, note on the part of the churches in dealing with the young.

By many such things might such an obsession be qualified and corrected. For the worst of it is that even when the interest of the one sex in the other is quite natural and innocent, yet, if it is made almost the whole concern, it produces a soil and climate which the supremacy of passion finds but too congenial as soon as a fiery temptation comes. You pile up tinder for any spark. What is being done, even by religion, for the moral education of youth as compared with its popular appeal to the sympathetic and impulsive? And is the result as valuable as the product is, say, in "Captains Courageous," where, without a woman in the process at all, a little horror, caught in time, is brought up by man's hand and God's sea to be the manliest of men.

THE EFFECT OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER XI

THE EFFECT OF LITERATURE

WHAT I say has a special bearing on literature, and on the literature of fiction in particular. I am not for the moment discussing novel-reading as mere fictional hypertrophy. I am not thinking of the over-development of the imaginative side of character at the cost of the intelligent or the practical. I am not concerned for the moment with the statistics of libraries as to the excess of novels issued over what is called more solid reading. I quite recognise that the incessant tickling of the imagination and the sympathies must be bad for both; and there is the old argument about the waste on imaginary cases of that pity

which should have inspired action to help actual cases. But I leave that aside.

Moreover, I recognise and I prize the immense number of stories and poems whose educative influence on the affections can only be good—unless they make us forget that there are other things that need educating than the affections, for the very sake of the affections themselves, that knowledge, no less than feeling, is required for the heart's just, full, and reasonable life. It is demoralising for affection to be made to think so much about itself, just as it is a bad religion that is always thinking and talking about religion; and it is the preachers' peril.

What I am thinking of is the preoccupation of this imaginative literature which forms the staple of young reading with the love interest. My complaint is against the abuse of even pure fiction which never takes the reader out of the region of sexual sentiment. And my fear is that preoccupation with such fiction

creates a social atmosphere in which it is too easy to become engrossed with bad fiction—fiction which no censorship could repress but which tends wrong. Tendency here is more serious than teaching. And all writing tends wrong, however correct, which promotes in any way the idea, which I call erotic, that passion is its own law, is the one thing that matters in life, and is the real foundation of the union of sex.

It is a great calamity that such education as the heart receives owes so much more to fugitive literature than to the Church or the family at the present hour. Here again we should speak with care. For novels are now a part of education, and there are, of course, no few favourites that are not only perfectly healthy, but unconsciously educative in the soundest way. They betray an author no less wise and kind as a mentor than happy as a story-teller. But these are apt to

be regarded as not strong enough food for the emancipated and forthright. The worst of the literary treatment of this subject is that happy marriage is no literary asset. It does not lend itself to acute literary effect. If we were guided only by the poetry, fiction, or drama of the day (and I am thinking of an area much wider than England), we might conclude that there were few other interests for a man or woman than love, especially irregular love, and but few happy marriages as the result.

I do not say for a moment that fiction should not handle such subjects. Fiction presents or interprets life, and they play a powerful part in life. But they are exceptional and solemn tragedies. And one objects to their becoming a daily entertainment, as novel after novel is read turning on that motive, or plays are seen —novels and plays, too, in which the solemnity of the matter is stripped away, and the subject, becoming an exploitable

idea, acquires a pedestrian, or even vulgar note, to tickle the groundlings' curiosity or fill the idlest hour. Or it may be that the wit is hard, cynical, and irresponsible, while the ethic is offensively anti-Christian.

Of course there are many unhappy marriages, often due to the poverty of social opportunity, or the crudity of our social stage of progress, or to that bad education of the heart of which I speak. There are many marriages which do not continue the romantic, rhapsodic, Byronic idea of love which makes such an element in the fiction of women for women. Are they therefore failures? Married life is often ruined by the notion that the ideal marriage should be found ready-made, that two people should expect to settle down into it as they would into the enjoyment of a house presented to them ready decorated and furnished for a lifetime, and that its happiness should come and remain without effort or discipline.

The truth that needs teaching, and is not taught, is that the ideal marriage, like the ideal personality, grows; that the true appropriation of this gift is the heart-culture of a lifetime. It does not drop ripe into our mouth. It is the fruit of difficulty, pain, sacrifice, and it is not quite unacquainted with friction. Reckon on such things, and turn them to moral account. Tiffs are not tragedies. It is childish, as soon as the clouds begin to drop, to think that heaven is burst. A happy marriage depends on the way these things are handled, and not on their entire absence. And a mistake is not irreparable.

Of course statistics are not possible on such a subject. But, when all is said, there is a huge average of those happy and affectionate marriages which it is the literary fashion to call humdrum because they do not make copy, because they have not thrills, because the literary

interest lies so largely in the tragic or sensational, or because it still labours with the old stage direction that marriage ends all. Marriage begins all.

The number of plays or novels that turn upon the breach or the failure of marriage would make us bad pessimists if we based our diagnosis of actual society on what the writers present. If the young are encouraged to think too much about licit affection, the married are encouraged to an interest too great in illicit. But, after all, the theatre is not England, the literary circle is not society, as Paris is not France. And even when we note the popularity of stories presenting a life of friction and a dismal close, we are cheered to think that there must be an immense amount of verve, happiness, and optimism among the people who can read such things. They must also be largely read by too comfortable people, who never come into contact with life's care

or tragedy except in their easy-chair. I do not suppose doctors, lawyers, or ministers read much of the pessimist or spasmodic novel. They have their hearts harrowed with the real thing, which imagination should enable us either to glorify or to forget, and should not merely reproduce and exploit. So, when one notes the appetite for novels and plays which turn on married infidelity and heartbreak, one may perhaps reflect that there must be much wholesome and fearless wedlock in the inquisitive audiences that enjoy such things. They represent something, like dukedoms, which does not enter the life of that public. It is not easy to think of any member of a family being able to bear the representation of such things if they had actually invaded it. You cannot, it is said, speak of a rope among the relatives of the hanged.

I am sure, therefore, that much of the

laxity that invades our idea of marriage is due to what Carlyle so rejoiced in—the literary person as priest or mentor, with the higher naturalism as his capital. And it is a fact bound to have serious consequences for ethic and society, that our youth forms such ideas as it has upon these matters from its favourite literature, chiefly from novels whose only religion is but inflated passion, and seldom from serious and studious teachers of social ethic, or from the one teacher of Christian ethic, the Church.

I am not asking if that is the fault of the Church's teachers in avoiding or neglecting such subjects. To an extent it is. But I am only noting the fact. And it is particularly unfortunate in regard to the moral culture of women. It may be said that that is mostly effected by the romantic way, by the stories they read. Now, apart from those writers who are contemptuous of ethics in the

treatment of passion, and apart from those who hate Christian ethic in particular, the capital of all but the very greatest imaginative writers is the passions *per se*, and especially the passion of love. And their principle is apt to be, "Love is enough," with a tendency to pass on and say, "Love is its own law."

I have already regretted that the minds of the young are so filled, and even stuffed, with the idea of such love. It stirs the regret, not only of such teachers as I have named, but of earnest writers in other countries. I am not here of course speaking of sensual passion. In some ways that does less mischief than fantastic or platonic passion, passion imaginative and transferable—

> "Ever let the fancy roam,
> Fancy never is at home."

Passion is saved by the element which raises love above, not the sensuous only, but also the fantastic, to the faithful

and the moral. And platonic affection mostly ends in plutonic.

The capital of the story-teller is natural love, and an infinite variety of fantasias are played on its elemental notes. And there is an incessant titillation of those interests and that side of the nature. Natural love comes to be the one interest life has for many such minds. The supremacy of such love becomes the only principle that quickens life. Religion, which should rule life, has no creative or regulative place. What novelist handles the soul? And, unhappily, some forms of religion encourage that note. We even have erotic religion. People are told in all kinds of ways that God is love, and Christianity is the religion of love—people whose one idea of love is natural affection. Holy demand goes out of sight. God is offered as the glorification of natural affection, or its benediction. And the only ethic such a religion knows is an

ethic of allowance or pity, not of the holy. It all co-operates sub-consciously with the habit of a literary age to make morality imaginative at best and sentimental at worst. It canonises natural and instinctive Humanity, and makes religion itself egoistic.

And to such a frame of mind, where worship is unknown, where obedience but galls, where sympathy is the one living thing, where all above us is but a dark and often tragic fate, where all beyond us is a dreary desert, with the old lights quenched by death, and nothing but mist coming down—I say to such a frame of mind the suggestion of temporary marriage comes with a certain plausibility, as recognising the sanctity of love alone in the union, and as ending the Pharisaism of union when love fades from its first glow. The idea of leasehold marriage, I have said, rests on such erotic alone and not upon faith or ethic. It rests on the fallacy

that passion alone consecrates union, and passion in its intensity rather than its quality. That is Eroticism. And it will even venture to press into its service much current talk of Christianity, and of its ethic as the ethic of love. Augustine is ignorantly quoted: "Love, and do as you will!" John is wrested and debased: "Who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

But there is more in love than passion, however great or imaginative. The love that hallows marriage has a moral nature in it, and a moral society round it. And Christianity is not the religion of love, but of *holy* and therefore atoning love, which makes it all the more divine as it makes it less promptly popular. It is the religion of a love which holds of the Eternal, and works under moral and social conditions. And, as such holy love, it is very different from that natural and instinctive love which makes literary capital or suits imaginative purposes. So that it makes but poor

stories, and prescribes a much more serious ethic than we like in the hours when we take refuge in fiction.

It is this moral and holy element in love that is the Christian soul of married love at last. We speak truly of Holy Matrimony. It is this holy, this moral, element in marriage that distinguishes it from mere contract which unites natural instinct, pure and steady as the instinct may often be. And because of this moral element both State and Church are not merely interested in marriage, but it is both a churchly and a civil institution, even the crucial meeting-point of State and Church (as we shall soon see). And the object of a religious ceremony in marriage is not simply to make things sweet and decorous, nor to be an opportunity for edification; but it moralises marriage from a height where man has his final destiny in God, and where the moral is the holy.

It is the way of the wild poet to speak

of love as a holy thing in itself. But it is nothing of the kind, unless we reduce religion to refined naturalism. Sacred you may perhaps call it, but not holy. And the new ethic, which is based on naturalism, erotic, or pity, we have seen going on to say not only that motherhood is holy, but that all motherhood is holy, that the right to a child belongs to every woman, and that we should drop the cruel bar that society places between motherhood married and single.

Such extreme claims are truly not very loud here, at least not yet; but abroad they are not only loud, but public and powerful, promoted by most effective writers of both sexes. And they will be here ere long; for the books are being translated and preachers enlisted. England does not get the first shock of these revolutionary blasts, but they always reach us in the end. And we ought to be ready in advance. And we

ought to be clear that sentiment is no foundation for morals, that passion does not contain its own law, that even proper pity and private mercy for the misled mother cannot prescribe the law of society in such a central matter.

Let us use every kind of philanthropic means to help the victims and mitigate the curse. Let us see that the seducer and deserter gets his due. But philanthropy is not ethic, pity is not morality ; it certainly is not the base of public morality ; and society cannot live on a mercy which takes no note of the holy, any more than a Church can. To much love much is forgiven. But it has to be forgiven. And a great love, if it be no more than a passion, can lead men and women into the very things which require most forgiveness, and yet make public forgiveness as hard as Christ's cross. Much has to be forgiven in an agony by holy love to guilty ; to a soul's supreme love

diverted upon man alone. The chief guilt of most men is made by their treatment of some form of love, human or divine. And the great tragedy of life is not the failure of love, but the failure which led to it—the failure of faith.

One thing more. It is easy for social Pharisees or starveling natures to take high and mighty ground on such matters, and to lay down prescriptions and proscriptions which in their spirit may be farther than the sinners from the Kingdom of Heaven. It is hoped that nothing here said may sound pitiless towards those to whom, as Plato says, love comes as a mania, on whom it lies like a doom, and works as a Sapphic curse rather than a Christian blessing. Let those who resent the exigency of Christian ethic here remember that it came from no bloodless spirit, but from the greatest Love that ever entered history, and from its lovers,

from the greatest Soul that ever sought mankind, from One whose heart broke in the passion of hallowing of that holy love which it knew to be the most powerful, priceless, and perfect thing in all the world, and the guarantee of its richest and conclusive bliss.

EPILOGUE

IT is one of the unhappy features of our time that the most deep and far-reaching issues are referred for a verdict to so many minds that have never been taught by any due training to realise their real ground and their immense and searching effects, minds that dismiss all that is not journalistic as academic, and prefer the amateur to the seer or the sage. The questions involved in sex are among these. Next to religion they raise the most momentous and solemn issues for all history. Most men who come to grief, it has been said, wreck either upon God or upon woman. And yet both orders of question are handled, I do not say merely

with a levity of manner, but with a levity of mind which is not only unworthy but incompetent and unfertile, and may entail great peril for the future. I trust these pages may contribute something to mitigate the violence of this anomaly, and to raise our interest to the range and dignity of matters with which society has so intimately and eternally to do.

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